



WASHINGTON, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 12, 1900.

## THE CITY OF WASHINGTON 1800-1900

What the Century Has Wrought in the American National Capital.

## STEADY EXPANSION ALONG THE BROADEST LINES

A Beautiful City of Government Palaces and Stately Homes  
—The Plans of L'Enfant as Afterwards Executed by Shepherd—History of the Selection of the Site and the Transfer of the Government From Philadelphia—The Future.

In celebrating the centenary of the National Capital the thousands of visitors here, from different sections of the United States will find additional enjoyment if they will keep clearly in mind the fundamental idea that this is their home, and the nation's home—that it is, in the broadest and fullest sense, a capital city of the people, by the people, and for the people.

It is not only a city founded and built by the people of all sections and States, but it is ruled directly by them through their Senators and Representatives in Congress. Unlike other cities, it has no State Legislature and no city council to call upon, hence Congress performs the duties of both, and a Board of District Commissioners, appointed by the President, acts practically as mayor. So completely is its government national that the citizens of the District of Columbia have no suffrage, and, therefore, no vote in District affairs.

## The Selection of the Site.

The Constitution of the United States, which went into effect in 1789, gave to Congress power "to exercise exclusive legislation in all cases whatsoever, over such district (not exceeding ten miles square) as may by session of particular States, and the acceptance of Congress, become the seat of the Government of the United States."

The first President, Washington, was inaugurated April 30, 1789, in New York, and almost immediately thereafter the claims and advantages of rival cities, as a seat of government, were presented to Congress. Over a dozen cities, and towns were competitors for the great prize, among which were Trenton, Philadelphia, Lancaster, Reading, Harrisburg, Carlisle, York, Germantown, Baltimore, and Georgetown. After a long and exhaustive consideration of the merits of the respective places, Congress, in 1790, selected Philadelphia as the temporary capital until 1800, when Washington was to become the permanent seat of government. This latter site was the first choice of Washington, for whom by general consent the Capital City was named.

In 1791 President Washington issued a proclamation that four boundary lines around the permanent site on the Potomac be established, and on April 15 of that year, the cornerstone of the Federal district was laid with due ceremonies. In 1793, the cornerstone of the Capitol building was laid with pomp and ceremony, and in 1800, Congress first assembled in its new and permanent home.

As may be seen, by reference to the map on the last page, the site of the Federal district was selected at the head of navigation on the Potomac River, and the new city was located between the two branches, on the Maryland side of the main stream.

As steam railways were unknown in those days a navigable river was a very important consideration. It will doubtless surprise the visitors here from the States, particularly those from the Mississippi Valley, to be told that the Potomac has four times the commercial capacity of the Father of Waters, even the lower stream from St. Louis to the Gulf. But such is the fact, for depth of navigation is the true test of a river's commercial capacity, and the Potomac has a depth of twenty feet in low water, and the lower Mississippi, for a good portion of several years past, a depth of only five feet and less, at times so shallow over



GEORGE WASHINGTON.

the many sand bars that transportation of grain is impeded.

So important did President Washington consider this feature of the new city

that he projected a canal supplement to the river to connect its upper stream with the head waters of the Ohio River, and unite, in commercial ties, the then

undeveloped West with the Atlantic Seaboard.

As soon as the choice of the site was ratified by Congress President Washington

issued a proclamation giving instructions in regard to the boundaries of the District, and describing them as follows: "Beginning at Jones' Point, being the upper cape of Hunting Creek, in Virginia, and at an angle in the outset of 45 degrees west of the north, and moving in a direct line ten miles for the first line; then beginning again at the same Jones' Point, and running another direct line at a right angle with the first, across the Potomac, ten miles for the second line; then from the termination of the first and second lines, running two other direct lines, of ten miles each, the one crossing the Potomac, and the other the eastern branch aforesaid, and meeting each other in a point."

Jones' Point, as shown on the map, is the southern extremity of the city of Alexandria. The District, as thus laid out, was ten miles square, as provided by the Constitution, and contained 100 square miles. Today it contains but sixty-nine and one-quarter square miles, as in 1846 about one-third of the District, which had originally been ceded by Virginia, was retroceded to that State, and is now known as Alexandria County.

## The Plan of the City.

One of the most striking and popular features of the National Capital is the plan of the city, designed by L'Enfant, whose praises are sounded in the ceremonies of the present Centennial Celebration, and in whose honor some permanent memorial will doubtless soon be erected.

As usual, everything relating to his favorite city was under the personal supervision of President Washington. His laying out is concisely and clearly stated in the United States Census Report of 1830, as follows:

"Under the personal direction of President Washington, the three Commissioners, with Andrew Elliott and Major Peter Charles L'Enfant, made arrangements for laying out the site of the city. . . .

"The city was laid out according to plans made by Major L'Enfant, based on the plan of the city of Versailles, France. This was substantially a plan for a regular network of rectangular streets, traversed diagonally by broad avenues, intersecting the streets obliquely, and giving occasion for many square, circular, and triangular reservations.

"The plan was carried out under the direction of Andrew Elliott, who later laid out the city of Buffalo on a somewhat similar plan.

"The central lines of the streets, both north and south and east and west, pass through the centre of the Capitol. They are placed according to the true meridian. . . .

"These diagonal avenues are very wide—generally each 160 feet. They constitute the real thoroughfares and landmarks of the city. . . .

"The streets and avenues of the Capital are wider than those of any other great city of the world."

From the dome of the Capitol the visitor can get the best view of the radiating avenues and the magnificence of the plan.

## Nineteenth Century Population.

The population of the District in 1800, when the Capital was removed here from Philadelphia, was 11,032. Today it is 278,718, ranking fifteenth among the leading cities of the United States. Its population, during its first century, which is the nineteenth of the Christian era, was as follows:

Year.	Population.	Per cent. of increase.	Year.	Population.	Per cent. of increase.
1800.....	11,032	.....	1890.....	253,980	43.25
1810.....	21,923	26.46	1870.....	121,700	73.41
1820.....	25,639	27.35	1860.....	117,424	34.87
1830.....	30,514	20.37	1850.....	230,397	29.71
1840.....	37,712	23.74	1900.....	278,718	20.69
1850.....	41,687	10.54			

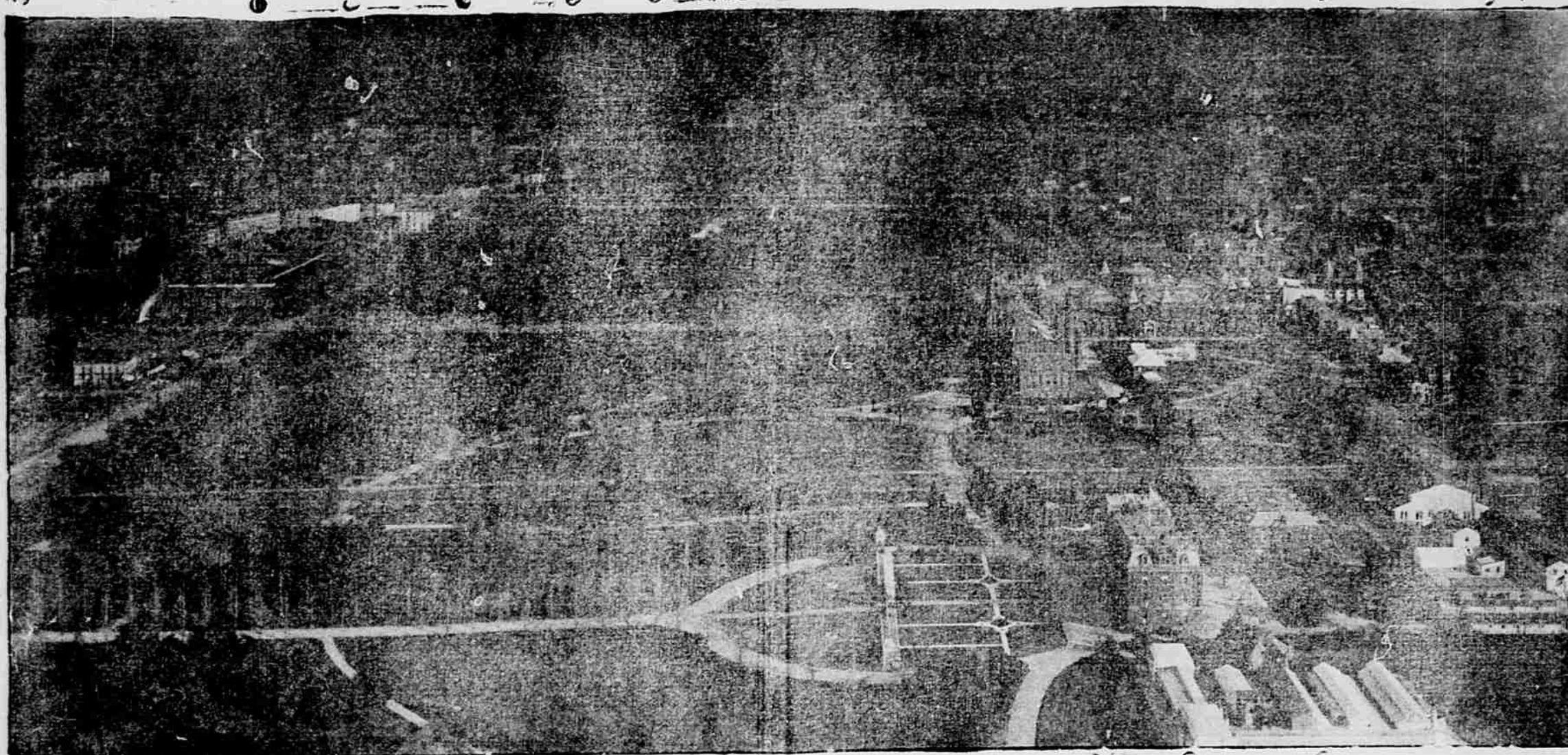
The average rate of increase, for each decade, was 36.15 per cent.

## Twentieth Century Population.

With the above official figures as a precedent, and guide, we will venture to estimate the future population of the District. It seems reasonable to suppose that the average percentage of increase, during each decade of the twentieth century, will be at least 25, which is far below the aforesaid, 36 per cent of increase, for each decade of the nineteenth century. On this basis the estimate is as follows:

Year.	Population.	Per cent. of increase.	Year.	Population.	Per cent. of increase.
1900.....	278,718	25	1900.....	1,002,221	25
1910.....	348,397	25	1920.....	1,252,626	25
1920.....	435,496	25	1930.....	1,565,282	25
1930.....	544,370	25	1940.....	1,956,602	25
1940.....	680,462	25	1950.....	2,445,752	25
1950.....	850,577	25			

The estimate seems reasonable for the additional reason that the population



WASHINGTON IN 1900.

Bird's-eye view from the top of the Monument showing the Mall, the Department of Agriculture, the Smithsonian Institution, the National Museum, the Botanical Gardens, the Capitol, and the Congressional Library.